

Court of Common Council



CITY OF HARTFORD

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**Testimony of Hartford City Council President Shawn T. Wooden
RE: Senate Bill 1153, An Act Concerning A Comprehensive
Legislative Review of the Commission on Human Rights and
Opportunities and Contract Compliance Procedures for the
Metropolitan District of Hartford County**

April 1, 2013

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today regarding Senate Bill 1153, An Act Concerning A Comprehensive Legislative Review of the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities and Contract Compliance Procedures for the Metropolitan District of Hartford County. I am here to speak in favor of Section 2 of the bill, which clarifies that the Metropolitan District Commission is a state agency for purposes of the set-aside program for small contractors, minority business enterprises, individuals with disabilities and nonprofit corporations. As compared to the many large out of state contractors, small businesses hire mostly Connecticut residents. So, this change will result in something that we all support in this room - increased job opportunities for Connecticut residents.

The Metropolitan District Commission was created by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1929, and currently serves eight municipalities, including my City of Hartford. The MDC plays an enormous role in my city's infrastructure and receives a significant amount of public dollars. There should be little doubt as to whether it is a public entity, and, as such, there is no good rationale why it should not be subject to the same requirements that we require of our state agencies. This legislation will accomplish that, giving the CHRO the oversight authority that it has over state agencies.

I am here today because Hartford faces a staggering 15% unemployment rate and my constituents need opportunities for work. Residents routinely complain about the disruption

from the significant amount of work being done by the MDC in Hartford and note the irony that many of them can't get jobs on the projects. For years, community groups have been protesting in front of the MDC in order to force them to hire more city residents, to employ more minority business enterprises. My constituents are frustrated that \$2.1 billion dollars is being spent in our community, but the MDC is not required to comply with the same laws to which other state agencies are subject.

Today, I ask you to support this bill. It will make an enormous difference to many. It will keep more resources right here in Connecticut and it will mean more Connecticut residents going to work each day. Thank you.